

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LEONE SUGGESTS A PROGRAM TO HEAL THE COUNTRY'S
ILLS

REF: ROME 12485

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT LEONE HAS CARRIED OUT HIS INTENTION, MADE KNOWN LAST AUGUST, TO PRESENT HIS VIEWS TO PARLIAMENT ON THE PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY. IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT, IT IS AN UNPRECEDENTED MOVE FOR A PRESIDENT (WHO HAS NO POWERS FOR LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE), AND HAS MOMENTARILY PRESENTED PARLIAMENT WITH THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO RESPOND. LEONE'S MESSAGE READS IN FACT LIKE THAT OF A PRESIDENT IN A PRESIDENTIAL REPUBLIC, AND PROPOSES SWEEPING REFORMS TO ELIMINATE INEFFICIENCY FROM ALL INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT. PARTY REACTIONS ARE MIXED, ONLY THE RIGHT SEEMS TO BE COMPLETELY HAPPY OVER THE PRESIDENT'S ASSUMPTION OF A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN URGING REFORMS. THE LEFT IS LEAST HAPPY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT LEONE HAS CARRIED OUT THE INITIATIVE HE PREVIEWED IN AUGUST TO SEND A MESSAGE TO PARLIAMENT ON THE ILLS OF THE COUNTRY. IN THE EVENT, THE MESSAGE COVERS THE SAME GROUND AS REPORTED REFTEL, BUT IN A MUCH MORE COMPREHENSIVE, SYSTEMATIC AND VIGOROUS MANNER. APPARENTLY, THE OPPOSITION EXPRESSED TO CERTAIN POINTS IN HIS AUGUST PREVIEW, PARTICULARLY HIS CALL FOR
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LEGISLATION TO REGULATE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, IN NO WAY

INITIMIDATED HIM. THE MESSAGE WAS WITH SOME SHOCK DESCRIBED BY SOCIALIST CHAMBER GROUP LEADER MORIOTTI AS THE "PRESENTATION OF A PRIME MINISTER". IT IS INDEED NOT UNLIKE THE MESSAGE A PRESIDENT IN A PRESIDENTIAL REPUBLIC WOULD SEND TO HIS COUNTRY'S ASSEMBLY.

2. PRESIDENT LEONE'S UNPRECEDENTED AND, IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT, SURPRISINGLY VIGOROUS INITIATIVE HAS PUT PARLIAMENTARY AND PARTY LEADERS MOMENTARILY AT A LOSS OVER WHETHER OR HOW TO REPLY. THE EXTREME RIGHT (MSI) AND LIBERALS (PLI) FAVOR A DEBATE AND A VOTE. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS FAVOR A DEBATE BUT THE AVOIDANCE OF A VOTE. THE SOCIALISTS (PSI), REPUBLICANS (PRI), AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (PSDI) ARE AGAINST EVEN A DEBATE. THE COMMUNISTS ARE CAUTIOUSLY NEUTRAL, BUT DO NOT FAVOR A VOTE ON THE MESSAGE. GIVEN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL GENIUS FOR RECONCILING OPPOSITES, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION NOW SEEMS THE MOST LIKELY TO PREVAIL.

3. REGARDLESS OF HOW THE MESSAGE AS AWHOLE IS HANDLED, INFORMAL DEBATE ON SENSITIVE POINTS IN THE MESSAGE HAS ALREADY BEGUN. TWO POINTS DIFFICULT TO STOMACH FOR THE LEFT ARE: LEONE'S CALL FOR MORE SEVERITY IN THE APPLICATION OF JUDICIAL NORMS REGARDING PROVISIONAL LIBERTY FOR MALEFACTORS, SUSPENDED SENTENCES, ETC., AND THE REGULATION OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE. PCI COMMENT HAS ALREADY REGISTERED RESERVATIONS ON THESE MATTERS. A SUMMARY OF LONE'S MESSAGE FOLLOWS:

4. IN GENERAL: LEONE DESCRIBES HIS MESSAGE AS AN INVITATION TO A RENEWAL OF LEGISLATIVE, POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION, AND OF PUBLIC MORALITY ITSELF, BECAUSE "IF THE CRISIS WE SUFFER IS NOT OVERCOME BY COMMON WILL, THERE WILL BE NO VICTORS, BUT ONLY DEFEATED..." HE REPEATEDLY ESPRESSES HIS CONCERN OVER THE CLIMATE OF DISORIENTATION, ANXIETY, AND DISILLUSIONMENT AMONG CITIZENS AND YOUTH, BUT FURTHER DESCRIBED THE MESSAGE AS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS PERSONAL CONFIDENCE IN THE FREE AND DEMOCRATIC FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY.

5. THE CONSTITUTION: PROPOSAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR A PRESIDENT TO SUCCEED HIMSELF AND TO ELIMINATE THE "WHITE SEMESTER," I.E., THE PRESENT INABILITY OF THE PRESIDENT TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS OF HIS TERM. (SEgni TRIED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAVE THIS DONE IN 1964, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS.)

6. CALL TO PASS TWO LAWS THE CONSTITUTION PRESCRIBES: ONE TO DEFINE THE POWERS OF THE PRIME MINISTER SO THAT HE CAN COORDINATE GOVERNMENT ACTION AND A SECOND TO REGULATE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE AND PROTECT FREEDOM TO FORM UNIONS, AS CALLED FOR BY ARTICLES 39 AND 40.

7. PARLIAMENT: CLEARER LAWS, FEWER SPECIAL LAWS, MORE CO-ORDINATION, MORE CONTROL OVER GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC EXPENDITURES.

8. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS: PROPOSED NOMINATION OF HIGH COMMISSIONERS FOR SPECIAL AREAS, ENERGY, ETC.; REDEFINITION OF NUMBER AND POWER OF MINISTRIES; REDUCTION IN UNDERSECRETARIES, CREATION OF A COORDINATING OFFICE FOR LEGISLATION TO AVOID DELAYS IN IMPLEMENTATION, ETC.

9. REVITALIZATION OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND LABOR COUNCIL, WHICH IS PROVIDED FOR THE CONSTITUTION, BUT HAS NOT FUNCTIONED FOR YEARS.

10. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: CLEAR DEFINITION OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICIALS, MOBILITY OF PERSONNEL, SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCEDURES, AND OTHER SIMILAR MEASURES.

11. JUSTICE: REFORMS FOR SELECTION OF BETTER JUDGES, TO CLARIFY LEGAL JURISDICTIONS, TO REORGANIZE TERRITORIAL JURISDICTIONS, AND A CALL FOR MORE SEVERITY WITH REGARD TO GRANTING PROVISIONAL LIBERTY, SUSPENDED SENTENCES, ETC.

12. THE ECONOMY: MORE PROGRAMMING AND MODERNIZATION, INCENTIVES FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES, SALARY REFORM, ENCOURAGEMENT OF PRIVATE INDUSTRY TO COUNTER RELUCTANCE TO INVEST AND FLIGHT OF CAPITAL, STRUGGLE AGAINST ABSENTEEISM, ELIMINATION OF "PONTE" VACATION PERIODS, JUST TAX MEASURES, MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE HOME BUYING AND TO LIMIT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN HOUSING TO THE NEEDY.

13. YOUTH: NEED FOR A MORE JUST AND MORE EFFICIENT STATE IN WHICH THEY CAN ALSO FORM A CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING CITIZENS OF EUROPE, SHARING THE IDEAL OF EUROPEAN UNITY, AND CONCRETE PROJECTS SUCH AS A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTED BY UNIVERSAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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